

STATEMENT OF BILLIE H. VINCENT, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF CIVIL AVIATION SECURITY, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES AND TRANSPORTATION, CONCERNING FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION SECURITY PROGRAMS. JUNE 27, 1985.

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I welcome the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee to discuss the civil aviation security programs of the Federal Aviation Administration. With me today is Ambassador Edward Marks, Deputy Director, Counter-Terrorism Programs at the State Department.

At the outset, let me assure you that the air transportation security system the United States has developed is fundamentally sound and provides on a routine basis safe and secure transportation to the traveling public. Let me elaborate on that point for a moment.

You will recall that, in the late 1960's and early 1970's, the United States experienced a surge of aircraft hijackings. In fact, hijackings were a worldwide problem. To deal with the problem at that time, the United States instituted as an interim measure a massive "sky marshal" program which was designed to provide a deterrence to would-be hijackers. The sky marshals made available to the FAA were from other Federal agencies, both

civil and military. That program subsequently evolved into an air marshal program, under the FAA's auspices, which is comprised solely of FAA employees who are deputized by the U.S. Marshals Service in order to provide them the power of arrest and the authority to carry weapons.

However, an air marshal program was not, by itself, the solution to deterring criminal acts against civil aviation. There was a need for a comprehensive approach, involving all segments of the aviation industry, to the protection of passengers, crews, and aircraft from acts of violence. Our current program which has been in place since about the mid-1970's, with continuing refinements, has been an unparalleled success. In fact, many elements of our program serve as models for the world community, and we have worked actively with the international community to provide our technical expertise and training to assist them in achieving improvements in aviation security.

The cornerstone of our civil aviation security program is the screening system we have had in place for domestic carriers since 1973. Pursuant to this regulatory requirement, all passengers and carry-on baggage are screened by the airlines before boarding. This has been an extremely effective element of our total program. For the past 11 years, almost 6 billion

persons and more than 7.4 billion pieces of carry-on baggage have been screened. This has resulted in the detection of over 31,000 firearms, and almost 13,000 related arrests have been made. In the process, at least 112 hijackings or related crimes have been prevented. In 1975, we extended FAA screening requirements, which heretofore applied to domestic carriers, to foreign carriers serving the United States.

As good as this security program has been, however, there are obviously reasons to enhance it even further in view of the hijacking of TWA #847 and the circumstances that the Canadians have experienced in the last few days. As a consequence, the Secretary, in her response to the Presidential initiatives announced on Tuesday, June 18, has recommended several improvements. Some of these were alluded to by Mr. Speakes in a press briefing on June 25. As noted by Mr. Speakes, the Secretary has recommended expanded use of the Federal air marshals; enhanced systems of assessment and monitoring of all foreign airports served by U.S. carriers; enhanced training of U.S. airline crews, coupled with airline security coordinators on board threatened flights; and acceleration and expansion of the research and development of explosives detection and hijack prevention systems.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the individuals who actually perform the screening are employees of the airlines or work for

the airlines on a contract basis. They use equipment which meets FAA specifications and receive training on the use of that equipment in accordance with FAA requirements. The airports are required to have available law enforcement officers to provide law enforcement support as necessary. Many of these law enforcement officers have undergone special training through the Department of Transportation's Transportation Safety Institute.

There are a variety of other FAA requirements which we place on the airlines to provide total security. For example, we require that they take action to secure their aircraft by locking the doors and lifting the stairs. Airline employees are also responsible for challenging unidentified persons found on the ramps near aircraft. There are a variety of other required actions on which we can elaborate if you wish.

The airports are also required to develop and submit comprehensive security programs to the FAA. Among the requirements placed on airport operators are to assure adequate law enforcement support; to control access to airport operations areas as well as the movement of persons and vehicles within those areas; and to assure that training of law enforcement personnel is conducted in accordance with FAA requirements. Again, there are a variety of other matters associated with the responsibilities of airport operators on which we can elaborate further, at your request.

Within the FAA, the Office of Civil Aviation Security is responsible for overseeing the security programs of the carriers and operators. This is done through our field office structure which works with airport operators and airlines to assure on a continuing basis that adequate procedures are in effect. I would add that this is a very close working relationship, and that, with few exceptions, we experience a high degree of cooperation from everyone involved.

The FAA also works closely with other agencies of government, both local and Federal, to identify threats against civil aviation and to take appropriate action when a hijacking occurs. Under Section 316 of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, as amended, the Administrator of the FAA is the individual charged with responsibility for overseeing law enforcement activities during a hijacking. To carry out this responsibility, we work closely with the FBI and other agencies who provide the necessary law enforcement support under our direction. In international hijackings, we work closely with officials of the Department of State as well. There are a variety of specific procedures which are activated during a hijacking, including a sophisticated communications net, to assure that all interested parties work together in a coordinated and efficient manner.

I have focused essentially on domestic security issues. Let me make it clear that we also are intensely interested in the security of passengers traveling on U.S. carriers anywhere in the world and of passengers traveling between a foreign country and the United States. Naturally, our ability to oversee a total security program, as we do domestically, cannot be duplicated in the international environment, nor would this extent of U.S. involvement be accepted by many foreign nations. We can require that air carriers serving the United States--whether foreign or domestic--meet basic FAA security requirements. We have no authority over the foreign airports themselves. This is where the difficulties arise. There is a wide disparity in the attitudes and degrees of responsibility shown by different countries in their administration of airport security. There is also a different level of threat associated with different geographic regions of the world. Consequently, what represents good security in a low threat region may be inadequate where that threat is greater.

We are working closely with the Department of State in its Anti-Terrorism Assistance program to provide training and technical assistance to other governments in their efforts to improve aviation security. We have found most foreign governments cooperative and genuinely concerned for the safety of all passengers. Unfortunately, that experience has not been

universal. Security conditions at the Athens Airport, where the current hijacking had its genesis, have troubled us and others for some time. FAA and State Department officials met on a number of occasions with Greek officials regarding the need to improve security at Athens, particularly due to its location in a high threat region. We and others have been generally unsuccessful in achieving those improvements at Athens. As an outgrowth of a meeting between State and FAA officials with their Greek counterparts last February, it appeared that some of the security problems might be resolved. Unfortunately, the Greek government, while agreeing in principle, did not move quickly to implement improvements. We have been in contact with the Greek government since the hijacking and the Greek government has made the commitment to us to improve airport security.

That completes my prepared statement, Madam Chairwoman. We would be pleased to respond to questions you may have at this time.